



# Unexpected selection for Asian meet triples Kirthana's joy

By AFTAR SINGH

**KUALA LUMPUR:** National triple jumper R. Kirthana (*pic*) is one lucky lady.

The Perak lass, despite failing to live up to expectations, is heading to her first Asian Athletics Championships in Doha from April 21-24.

It has been 22 months and Kirthana has yet to better her personal best of 13.48m, which she did at the G. Kosanov Memorial meet in Almaty in Kazakhstan in June 2017.

The 22-year-old was selected for the Asian meet after she won a gold medal with an effort of 13.17m in the Malaysian Grand Prix last month.

In February, she did a season best of 13.28m to win at the Perak All-Comers Championships in Ipoh.

Kirthana said that she never expected to be selected as she has failed to come close to her personal best since 2017.

"This is the biggest competition of my career since I took up triple jump in 2014.

"I'm excited to feature in the meet as I'll be competing against the best in Asia," said Kirthana, who featured in the World Junior Championships in Bydgoszcz in Poland in 2016 and finished 13th with a jump of 12.68m.

Kirthana acknowledged that her performance has been far from impressive.

She suffered a slipped disc during the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games in 2017 where she finished fourth (13.19m) and came in ninth in the long jump (5.66m).

"I'm currently the country's number one but my jumps have been inconsistent.

"The time has come for me to prove myself. My aim in Doha is to chalk up a personal best and qualify for the Philippines SEA Games in November," added Kirthana, who needs to equal or beat the qualifying mark of 13.52m.

Kirthana, who is majoring in mass communication at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), said her best outing last year was winning two silvers in the Asean University Games in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, in December.

She recorded 12.60m in the triple jump and 5.60m in the long jump.

Kirthana is the only female among eight athletes going to the four-day meet in Doha.

The others are Muhd Zulfiqar Ismail (100m), Russel Nasir Taib (200m), Muhd Irfan Shamsuddin (discus), Jackie Wong Siew Cheer (hammer), Andre Anura (long jump), Muhd Hakimi Ismail (triple jump), Nauraj Singh Randhawa and Lee Hup Wei (high jump).

At the last championships in Bhubaneswar, India, in 2017, Irfan won silver with a hurl of 60.96m.